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C O N F I D E N T I A L VATICAN 000538

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [VT](#) [PGOV](#) [PBTS](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: VATICAN UNHAPPY WITH LAWSUITS

CLASSIFIED BY: Peter Martin, Pol/Econ Chief, Vatican, State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

1. (C) Holy See Secretary of State (Prime Minister equivalent) Cardinal Angelo Sodano took the bulk of his initial meeting November 12 with the Ambassador to register his displeasure with the several lawsuits filed in U.S. courts that have been served at the Vatican. Sodano complained about the "aggressive attorneys" who had started in on the Vatican with the sexual abuse scandal and had also filed suits about Nazi-era gold allegedly acquired by the Holy See. Sodano was confident that, due to the truth of the matters and the principle of sovereign immunity, the Holy See would emerge unscathed from these suits. But the way it was all happening was unsettling to him. "It's one thing for them to sue bishops," Sodano said, "but another thing entirely to sue the Holy See." He asked the Department to urge a respect for the sovereign immunity of the Holy See (as any foreign government) so as to avoid these incidents. The Ambassador assured Sodano that the U.S. respected the Holy See as a sovereign power, and that he would pass along his concerns.

2. (C) Comment. We are aware that the Department has certain legal obligations in these cases. We will continue to communicate closely with L on the issue and seek to minimize the friction with the Holy See while still fulfilling these obligations. End Comment.

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